

Tsipras urges Greek pseudo-left groups to rally behind SYRIZA

Robert Stevens
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SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left) leader Alexis Tsipras has made an appeal to the various pseudo-left formations in Greece to work with his party ahead of the upcoming January 25 election and beyond.

All recent opinion polls show SYRIZA ahead of the conservative New Democracy and set to be the leading party in any government following the election. Speaking to SYRIZA's central committee on Saturday, Tsipras said, "We are appealing first and foremost to the forces of the Left from the left socialists to the extra-parliamentary left. We are appealing to the KKE [Stalinist Communist Party of Greece] and ANTARSYA [Anticapitalist Left Cooperation for the Overthrow] and call on them to realise that the battle that we have to wage supersedes our existing differences within the left."

Tsipras made further overtures to the Democratic Left (DIMAR), with whom SYRIZA has been involved for months in talks aimed at securing a joint platform for the election. DIMAR was founded in 2010 as a right-wing split from SYRIZA. Following the 2012 general election, DIMAR entered a coalition along with the social democratic PASOK and Prime Minister Antonis Samaras's New Democracy. This regime carried out brutal attacks on workers' living standards at the behest of the international financial aristocracy. In June 2013, DIMAR withdrew from the government with its 14 MPs, reducing the coalition's parliamentary majority to just three.

Tsipras said of his party's attempts to incorporate DIMAR into an alliance, "In the last few months we had an honest political dialogue with DIMAR. Despite the intense disagreements in previous years, we observed with interest the political process that took place after [DIMAR] left the Samaras government. *Even if we can't fight the elections together, the*

necessity for a wider alignment will remain the day after the elections, for the salvation of society and the recovery of the country" [emphasis added].

The message from Tsipras is that creating the necessary political coalition may not be possible before the election, but after it, SYRIZA will be prepared to block with all those nominally described as "left". Neither has Tsipras ruled out alliances with right-wing forces in a government of "national salvation," such as the Independent Greeks, which his party has collaborated with in the recent past.

Tsipras's intervention came as the Left Platform within SYRIZA, an amalgam of Stalinists and pseudo-left elements, made a concerted attempt to shore up SYRIZA's threadbare "radical" pretensions.

The leader of the Left Platform is veteran Stalinist Panagiotis Lafazanis, who cut his teeth as a leading figure in the KKE. Lafazanis is SYRIZA's parliamentary group spokesman, a role he assumed in June 2010 following the resignation from the party of Fotis Kouvelis. Kouvelis moved to establish the Democratic Left, a party whose limited support has largely evaporated due to its participation in government.

In an interview Monday with ANA-MPA webTV, Lafazanis declared, "There is no ground for SYRIZA's cooperation with PASOK, POTAMI [The River party of TV journalist Stavros Theodorakis] or the newly founded Mr. Papandreou's party."

Former PASOK leader George Papandreou founded the Movement of Democratic Socialists at the weekend.

Lafazanis stated, "All the above political parties move in the same direction and are on the same course. What they want is a second round of memorandum catastrophe, worse than the first one, for the country...at this time the only alternative is SYRIZA that addresses

all the people and to all the citizens. It can create a new popular unity with optimism and hope for a future of recovery and reconstruction.”

Lafazanis is a professional windbag, who has long sought collaboration with the KKE and ANTARSYA, a smaller coalition that includes the pseudo-left Socialist Workers Party, the Organisation of Communist Internationalists of Greece-Spartakos (the section of the Pabloite United Secretariat), Stalinists and Maoists. The Left Platform’s role is to add some desperately needed “left” verbiage to SYRIZA’s public face. The recent comments of Lafazanis and Tsipras demonstrate that they want to utilise their relations with different pseudo-left outfits in and around SYRIZA’s orbit in a desperate attempt to portray it an anti-austerity tendency.

What SYRIZA is in fact asking of the various pseudo-left outfits is to sign up to a government dedicated to the defence of Greek capitalism, the European Union and the NATO military alliance.

In an interview with the *Huffington Post* Monday, Tsipras made his clearest statements yet regarding the pro-capitalist mission of a SYRIZA-led government. “SYRIZA is not an ogre, or a big threat to Europe, but the voice of reason,” he said. “It’s the alarm clock which will lift Europe from its lethargy and sleepwalking. This is why SYRIZA is no longer treated as a major threat like it was in 2012, but as a challenge to change.”

He promised from the “first days of its administration a specific, cost-efficient and fiscally balanced programme, ‘The Thessaloniki Programme’ regardless of our negotiation with our lenders.”

“SYRIZA does not want the collapse but the rescue of the euro,” he said. “And saving the euro is impossible for the Member States when public debt is out of control.”

Tsipras emphasised the alignment of his party with the European Central Bank (ECB), which along with the European Union and International Monetary Fund—the “troika”—have imposed a level of suffering and collapse in living standards in Greece not seen since the Second World War. SYRIZA puts forward “the strategy of ‘whatever it takes,’—which was first said by the head of the ECB—to save the euro,” he concluded.

Influential representatives of the ruling elite have

come forward to give SYRIZA their seal of approval in the last weeks. A *Financial Times* (FT) article Tuesday singled out SYRIZA’s George Stathakis, the party’s shadow development minister and senior economic spokesman, as “market friendly”. In an interview given to the FT, Stathakis was at pains to stress, “We want to make life easier for businesspeople, to help remove problems with bureaucracy that they complain about.... It’s important to be able to create jobs.”

Another FT article published Tuesday pointed out that the markets had nothing to fear from SYRIZA coming to power. It noted, “At the core of Mr. Tsipras’s economic platform is debt relief, an idea so unthinkable that nearly every mainstream economist has advocated it.”

Posing the question, “How radical is Mr Tsipras’ idea...of debt restructuring?” columnist Peter Spiegel answered, “So radical that, according to three officials involved in the discussions, eurozone officials actively considered such a plan in late 2012. The French-led initiative would have led to Greece’s debt obligations being cut in tranches—much the same way bailout aid is granted—after meeting a series of economic reform commitments.”

The article noted of SYRIZA’s leader, “Most think that with power within his grasp, he wants to govern and realises he can do so only from the centre, even if a third of his party are Marxist radicals.” It concluded, “like the markets, most European officials appear to have priced in a Tsipras victory.”

This assessment of SYRIZA and the perspective outlined by Tsipras are the clearest expression of the reactionary role of the pseudo-left as an instrument of capitalist rule.



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